(c) when the report of enquiry is expected; and

(d) steps being taken to minimize such air crashes in future?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir..

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The inquiry report in likely to be finalised by August, 2003.

(d) A continuous and multi-faceted efforts is always afoot in Indian Air Force to enhance and upgrade flight safety. Measures to enhance the quality of training to improve the skill levels, ability to exercise sound judgment and situational awareness of pilots are being pursued.

Constant interaction with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) of concerned countries are also maintained to overcome the technical defects of aricraft.

MiG-21 Crashes

1037. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether yet another MiG-21 aircraft crashed in first week of June, 2003 near Barmer in Rajasthan;

(b) the number of such aircraft crashed and pilots killed in current calendar year;

(c) the causes of these crashes;

(d) whether Government is thinking of phasing out these aircrafts; and

(e) if so, how long it will take?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Three MiG-21 aircraft crashed and three pilots were killed.

(c) Courts of Inquiry have been set up to ascertain the causes and are still in progress.

(d) and (e) A gradual phasing out of the Mig-21 fleet is being resorted to keeping in view factors like technical and calendar life, maintainability and replacement. However, a specific time frame can not be fixed.

Steps to Prevent Infiltration

1038. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO:
SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan sponsored terrorist outfits were making their leases and digging hideouts in Hilkaka and surrounding ridges and passes along the Western slopes of Pir Panjal range in Jammu and Kashmir for the last many years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) when these developments came to the notice of Indian Armed Forces;

(c what were the reasons for the failure of our intelligence in such important areas; and

(e) the action taken and proposed to be taken by Government to prevent such infiltration and abuse of our border areas by terrorists?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (b) Intelligence agencies have been monitoring activities of terrorists in Hilkaka area of Jammu & Kashmir during the last four years. The terrorists often use the remote and rugged areas like Hilkaka for establishing hideouts and caches for weapons. Based on the intelligence inputs, a large number of counter insurgency operations were conducted during the last four years to neutralize terrorists operating in the area.

(e) Adequate military measures have been put in place to check infiltration of terrorists into Jammu & Kashmir. The countrer measures in vogue include surveillance of all known routes of infiltration, including deployment of electronic surveillance devises, multi tiered deployment, construction of fencing along the International Border in Jammu & Kashmir and at selected places along the Line of Control.